

Parents assail county over child policy

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By The Tribune news services

About 35 people gathered outside the Alameda County Administration Building in Oakland yesterday to charge that overzealous county agencies are unlawfully using county funds to take children away from their parents.

John Murcko the president of Victims of Child Abuse Laws (VOCAL), said that county agencies often take children away from a parent based on an allegation of abuse even though 80 percent of such allegations turn out to be bogus.

He said the role of the county used to be to help divorcing parents work out cooperative parenting arrangements.

But now, he said, "Some of those parents learned to obtain sole custody and vent their anger and gain revenge on their ex-spouses by fabricating allegations of child abuse."

Murcko said accused parents are often deprived of visiting their children at all, even during the holidays.

Those attending the rally brought Christmas presents to county officials and asked them to give the toys to their children.

Murcko said, "The purpose of this rally is to send a message to the children that they are not forgotten and are wanted back home by their families."

Helen Knudson, Alameda County social services director, could not be reached for comment.